

# Seminar Presents Insight on Terrorism and Criminal Extremism

*By Mike Cameron, staff writer*

America has spent millions of dollars since 9-11 to protect itself from terrorism. A seminar held on March 10 in Topeka, presented ways for Kansans to assist with the effort – and it won't cost the government a cent.

Introduction to Terrorism and Criminal Extremism: An Awareness Program for Citizens presented an overview of how and why terrorists operate. A look at the threats terrorists pose to our nation as well as our communities was presented, along with special attention to the nature of suicide bombings.

David L. Carter, Ph.D., a criminal justice professor at Michigan State University, led the seminar that was attended by several members of KDHE staff as well as representatives from several other state and local public safety agencies. The presentation was also open to the public.

Suicide bombers have yet to attack in this country, but Carter expressed that they are a plausible threat for several reasons, including the fact that a suicide bomber is the “ultimate smart bomb.” The tactic has been used frequently in other countries because a suicide attack is easier and cheaper than an attack with a weapon of mass destruction.

Carter, a former Kansas City, MO police officer presented an easily understood overview of the structure and operation of both domestic and international terrorist and extremist groups, including a look at the aim of terrorists. According to Carter, some times terrorists operate with the goal, “Kill one; frighten a thousand.”

Attendees were reminded that they can take an active role in counterterrorism by doing three things: observe, document and report any activity that appears suspicious. According to Carter, it is much better to report something that turns out to be a false alarm than to not report something that appears insignificant and is an actual prelude to a terrorist act.

Carter listed some of the things an average person should be on the lookout for, such as a person conducting surveillance of a potential target and taking abundant notes, asking questions that “go beyond normal curiosity,” testing security by walking or driving into prohibited areas “by accident” or just acting suspiciously.

Such activity should be documented by jotting down descriptions of people and vehicles. The ethnicity, age, gender, complexion, height, weight and clothing should be noted. When listing the description of vehicles, Carter advised attendees to use **CYMBAL** – **C**olor, **Y**ear, **M**ake, **B**ody and **L**icense plate.

Any suspicious activity should be reported to the police, and Carter reminded everyone that something that may seem to be insignificant, may be an important piece of information in a larger puzzle. “Always follow your intuition,” Carter said.

The seminar was presented by the Regional Community Policing Training Institute at Wichita State University and was funded by a grant from Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), a division of the U.S. Department of Justice.